IMPACT OF SUPERMAN EVOLUTIONARY SCHEME ON VIRTUES AND PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR: A STUDY ON MIDDLE SCHOOL CHILDREN

Synopsis

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1. INTRODUCTION

The idea of the Superman has fascinated thinkers throughout history, spanning cultures and philosophies. Plato and Aristotle discussed the need for exceptional individuals to lead society, while characters like Odysseus in Homer's "Odyssey" and Ulysses in Dante's "Divine Comedy" embody qualities of superhuman wisdom and courage. Even in Indian philosophical texts, there are hints of beings who transcend human limitations. This concept reflects humanity's timeless pursuit of excellence and enlightenment, persisting as a symbol of our potential for greatness beyond the ordinary.

Superman, in philosophy, the superior man, who justifies the existence of the human race. This superior man would not be a product of long evolution; rather, he would emerge when any man with superior potential completely masters himself and strikes off conventional Christian “herd morality” to create his own values, which are completely rooted in life on this earth. (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2024)

Friedrich Nietzsche, a German philosopher, released a book titled "Thus Spoke Zarathustra" (also known as "Also Sprach Zarathustra", 1883-85). Within this work, Nietzsche explored the complex relationship between morality and humanity, with a central focus on the concept of the Übermensch, often translated as the "overman" or "superman." In his philosophical framework, the Übermensch is portrayed as an individual who questions society's conventional notions of morality, viewing them as subjective and socially influenced. Friedrich Nietzsche says, “I teach you Superman, Man is something that is to be surpassed.” Nietzsche suggested that Superman represents the pinnacle of human development. Rejecting traditional notions of goodness and virtue, Superman esteems strength and power as paramount in life's struggles. Nietzsche argues that true morality lies in the pursuit of power, asserting that the desire for power is life's ultimate goal and value. (Q, 2017b)

The Übermensch, according to Nietzsche, forges his own moral code derived from personal experiences. Nietzsche portrays his Übermensch, or superman, as the epitome of the future's superior human, transcending conventional morality to construct and uphold individual values, aiming to elevate humanity. Nietzsche's Superman embodies a mythic figure that surmounts challenges to realize its objectives, symbolizing strength at its core. (“Friedrich Nietzsche’s Superman and Its Religious Implications,” 2019)

Rejecting Nietzsche's idea that a singular, universal morality providing humanity with purpose is a delusion, Dayalbagh, aims to create a new world by redefining morality, fostering the evolution of a superior race of Superman.

In his renowned play "Man and Superman," English playwright George Bernard Shaw presents his theory of the Superman. According to Shaw, the primary aim of human existence is the development of intellect, enabling individuals to discern and fulfil their purpose. The Superman depicted in Shaw's play is characterized by heightened intellect and intuition, capable of challenging outdated moral norms and defining personal virtues. Shaw advocates for "creative evolution," emphasizing deliberate breeding and nurturing over the unpredictability of natural selection, as the means to facilitate this process. (Q, 2017a)

In His discussion on the disparities between the concept of Superman of Dayalbagh and Nietzschean and Shavian ideologies, Most Revered Prof. Prem Saran Satsangi Sahab, Chairman, Advisory Committee on Education, Dayalbagh Educational Institutions, elucidates, “But in Satsang we believe that as far as the spirit entities are concerned, all of them came into existence at the beginning of the creation itself. They were allotted abodes in accordance with the initial load of their karmas. There was no evolution in spirit forces. If at all there was any evolution it was in the physical or mental bodies or covers that the spirit forces assumed. That evolution is continuing.” (Q, 2017b)

In his renowned text "Nicomachean Ethics," Aristotle introduces the idea of the 'magnanimous man,' a concept central to Aristotelian ethics, which portrays this figure as akin to a 'superman.' Aristotle’s Superman, or the great-souled man “does not expose himself needlessly to danger, since there are few things for which he cares sufficiently; but he is willing, in great crises, to give even his life, knowing that under certain conditions it is not worth-while to live. He is of a disposition to do men-service, though he is ashamed to have a service done to him. To confer a kindness is a mark of superiority; to receive one is a mark of subordination…because of his contempt for men and things...He never feels malice, and always forgets and passes over injuries...” (Aristotle et al., 2011). (Q, 2017a)

Aristotle views bestowing kindness as a sign of superiority, contrasting it with receiving as a sign of subordination. In contrast, humility is esteemed as the defining trait of the Superman of Dayalbagh, where individuals are taught to exhibit extreme humility. Highlighting the disparity between Aristotle's "magnanimous man" and the Superman of Dayalbagh, Most Revered Prof. Prem Saran Satsangi Sahab,

Chairman, Advisory Committee on Education, Dayalbagh Educational Institutions, states: “One may not like to be shown mercy by anyone else but one should beg for mercy from the Lord Almighty. Accordingly, if one is free from egotism, one would not be shy to beg for the mercy of Ra-Dha-Sva-Aa-Mi Dayal. Whatever our Superman may be, he would behave in an extremely humble manner.” The Superman of Dayalbagh is encouraged to embody profound humility, drawing inspiration from the ethos of compassion and dedication to service. Their source of strength for serving others is found through prayer and connection with the divine. (Q, 2017a) (Q, 2017b)

The anticipation for the emergence of Nietzschean Übermensch, Shavian, and Aristotelian Supermen resembles waiting for unicorns to appear in a zoo. Supermen are a prophetic notion within their respective philosophies. These thinkers envisioned their superior beings as future saviours of the world, yet they remain elusive figures, not manifested in reality. However, in Dayalbagh, Huzur Sahabji Maharaj's Superman is already in the process of evolution, transcending the realm of mere dreams. Alongside embodying virtues advocated by philosophers, the Superman of Dayalbagh, is also mastering the fundamental principle of self-administration—a key tenet of Dayalbagh’s inner governance. (Q, 2017b)

In a hope to help in the creation of a race of ‘Supermen’, who would be set apart from the rest of humanity, by their quality, character, behavior, values and ideals, and their desire to serve. The recent scheme of Evolutionary Superman for children is the first step in this journey. As regular participants in the activities promoting holistic development every day, these children gain good samskaras from a very tender age. (Q, 2019)

1.1 CONCEPT OF SUPERMAN AND SUPERMAN EVOLUTIONARY SCHEME IN DAYALBAGH

In the realm of Dayalbagh, the evolution of Superman unfolds continuously. In the early stages of preschool and childhood, children often exhibit a natural inclination towards faith, guided by their experiences. During this phase, they primarily respond to the actions of parents and other influential adults, gradually learning to take initiative themselves. It's a crucial period for nurturing values and imparting essential life skills, as children eagerly explore, observe, experience, and react to the world around them. Superman is not selection-based, but is evolutionary and is open to all (Satsangi Sahab,

2017).

Most Revered Prof. Prem Saran Satsangi Sahab, Chairman, Advisory Committee on Education, Dayalbagh Educational Institutions, a system scientist, defined the new Superman who are formed in Superman Evolutionary Scheme started by him, for pre-nursery children of 3 weeks to 2 years in Phase-I, 3 to 5 years in Phase-II, 6 to 8 years in phase III and 9 to 12 years in phase IV, for the balanced development of body, mind and spirit which will help gradually evolve the race called Superman.

According to this scheme, Superman has been defined as, "A complete man with balanced development of body, mind and spirit is called a Superman. He will not come into existence in a day; he will evolve gradually as the human body evolves gradually according to Darwinian principle. As is the case of the body, mind and spirit will also evolve gradually, and the spirit and mind will become so pure that a Superman will come into existence." (Satsangi, P.S., (2017, February 7). The Dayalbagh Herald (e-Herald Daily). *Dayalbagh*. Retrieved December 16, 2023, from http://www.dayalbagh.org.in/)

These infants and children are accompanied by their parents in the activities at Dayalbagh, with the aim of growing up with a strong value system so that they can spread the message of "Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man". (Satsangi, P. S. 2010. "Cosmology from the Twin Vantage Points of Radhasoami Faith and Systems Science, Vision Talk at International Seminar on Religion of Saints ('Sants') – Radhasoami Faith." Spiritual Consciousness Studies (SPIRCON 2010), Agra, India, November 12–13, 2010.) They learn and educate themselves by observing, exploring, performing and interacting with peers and nature. This inculcates in them, the spirit of brotherhood of mankind, societal commitment, discipline, ability for hard work, selfless service, humility, co-operative spirit and dignity of labour. (*Summer About DEI – Dayalbagh Educational Institute*, n.d.)

The ultimate objective of the Dayalbagh Superman Evolutionary Scheme's holistic development is to integrate a person's physical, intellectual, emotional, and ethical aspects. This is an innovative concept, in which twice a day, at the agroecological and precision farming sites, young children (3 weeks to 12 years old) join in congregational prayers, selfless service (seva) in fields, and healthcare exercise. They are accompanied by a parent or caregiver. Kids are involved in everything from computer, language, and maths skills to cultural events, yoga, and outdoor self-defence. (Dua et al., n.d.)

It has been discovered that the Dayalbagh way of life has an impact on participants, causing them to

grow physically more quickly than the control group (Bhatnagar and Kumar, 2022). The research also revealed that the physically developed infants and children, aged three weeks to three years, who took part in the study, outperformed the control group in terms of IQ, social and emotional maturity, and intuitive and spiritual abilities. In general, culture, socialization, early exposure to nature, or the absence of these, shape a large portion of our interactions with the environment. (Clayton and Myers, 2009; Kellert, 2002). The Superman Scheme of Dayalbagh fosters this relationship with nature for a bio-socio-cognitive development from a young age. (Dua et al., n.d.)

The Superman of Dayalbagh is in the process of evolving into a compassionate, humble, universal being which is the outcome of being nurtured in a spiritual atmosphere. It is believed that individuals raised in such spiritually enriched atmospheres have enhanced opportunities to attain their fullest potential in every aspect: physical, emotional, intellectual, social, and spiritual. Consequently, development within this framework is holistic, emphasizing the fundamental principle of 'nature and nurture' as the central focus guiding all associated activities.

The Biology of Belief (2015) draws on the research of epigeneticist Bruce H. Lipton to explore the impact of genetics on our consciousness, behavior and belief systems. Based on the insights of stem cell biologist Bruce H. Lipton, scientific studies have validated the influence of the environment on genetic alterations. While genes play a role in shaping behavior, it's equally valid that behavior can impact genes (Lipton, 2015). The Superman Evolutionary Scheme of Dayalbagh aligns with Lipton's theory.

1.2 CONCEPT OF VIRTUES

According to Most Revered Prof. Prem Saran Satsangi Sahab, Chairman, Advisory Committee on Education, Dayalbagh Educational Institutions, a system scientist, “Better world order is an order in which the qualities and virtues of the spirit find the fullest expression. It is neither unworldliness nor hedonistic pleasure-seeking worldliness. It focuses on physical, mental and spiritual developments”.

Our world is full of different species interacting within their groups as well as with other groups in order to help the process of survival. This survival is however essentially dependent on the ways they understand each other’s needs and the medium of expression of these needs. In the case of human beings, expressions are visible in the form of language, gestures, and also through our personalities. A personality is made up of several elements in varying proportions which are responsible for making the

owner of that personality an admirable person or otherwise. A person of virtues is considered to have a good character. A virtue is a quality or behavioral characteristic that is seen as admirable or desirable in an individual. Personal virtues are distinctive personal characteristics that individuals possess, such as personality traits, and are recognized for their ability to boost both individual and societal well-being. According to the APA Dictionary of Psychology (2018), virtue is a quality or characteristic that has positive connotations in a particular society and that is considered beneficial to psychological health. It is also a form of moral goodness.

Character that is good consists of virtues. These are ubiquitous and have their roots in biology attributable to an evolutionary path that encouraged these exceptional qualities in order to accomplish all that is required for the continued survival of the human race. A person must possess these qualities at levels above the bare minimum in order to be regarded to have good character.

PLATO'S CONCEPT OF CARDINAL VIRTUES

Plato (427-347 B.C) presents his perspective on virtue in both the Protagoras and the Republic. In the Protagoras, Plato, through Socrates (469-399 B.C.), argues that virtue equates to knowledge. The argument initiates with the notion that everyone pursues what they perceive as good. Consequently, if someone engages in wrongful behavior, it cannot stem from a conscious desire to do wrong; rather, it arises from a mistaken belief that the action is good. The distinguishing factor between the virtuous and the non-virtuous lies not in their desire for goodness but in their comprehension of what truly constitutes the good. According to Plato, human virtue ultimately entails understanding the good and possessing the ability to make correct choices that lead to the best outcomes. Hence, the virtuous individual differs from the non-virtuous primarily in their possession of this knowledge, which Plato asserts hinges on understanding how to attain it. (Gerson, n.d.), (Guthrie, 1971)

The four virtues which Plato described in the Republic were later called the cardinal virtues. The word 'cardinal' is a derivative of the Latin word 'cardo', meaning a hinge, and the cardinal virtues are the virtues by which moral life is supported. Plato describes the four cardinal virtues in The Republic: Wisdom (calculative) - see the whole Courage (spirited) - preserve the whole Moderation (appetitive) - serve the whole Justice (founding/preserving virtue) - "mind your own business" i.e. "tend to your soul"/"know yourself". (Carr, 1988), (Carr, 2011)

Plato outlines the means by which individuals can achieve these virtues as- wisdom is acquired through the exercise of reason; courage through the regulation of emotions or spirit; moderation (sometimes referred to as temperance) through allowing reason to govern desires; and from these, justice naturally emerges—a state where all aspects of the psyche harmonize. Plato describes justice as the foundational and sustaining virtue because only when one comprehends justice can they attain the other three virtues, and once one possesses all four virtues, it is justice that acts as the cohesive force binding them together. (Carr, 1988)

SOCRATES'S CONCEPT OF VIRTUES

According to Socrates, virtue represents the fundamental and intrinsic inclination of humanity, with knowledge being its essence "… if there exists any good thing different, and not associated with knowledge, virtue will not necessarily be any form of knowledge. If on the other hand knowledge embraces everything that is good, we shall be right to suspect that virtue is knowledge." If virtue equates to knowledge, it becomes something that can be understood and therefore imparted through teaching. (*Virtue Is Knowledge: The Moral Foundations of Socratic Political Philosophy – Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, n.d.), (*Virtue Is Knowledge*, n.d.)

According to Socrates, virtue stands as the paramount objective and ultimate good to pursue in life, thereby necessitating universal consistency and uniformity for all individuals. Similarly, knowledge exhibits universal consistency and uniformity, achievable through conceptualization aided by a shared faculty of reason inherent in all. The connection between virtue and knowledge is indissoluble in Socrates' view. He posits that attributes like health, wealth, beauty, courage, and temperance, typically regarded as diverse manifestations of goodness, only hold true goodness when guided by wisdom; otherwise, they could be deemed forms of evil when guided by folly. (*Socrates | Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, n.d.), (*Meno Section 4: 96-100 Summary & Analysis | SparkNotes*, n.d.)

Understanding the concept of the good seeks to govern all other concepts and, in the end, directs the entire mankind, includes their will and emotions, and eventually drives them to act morally. This is Socrates' rationale for believing that "knowledge is virtue" and "no one does wrong knowingly." (*Virtue Is Knowledge: The Moral Foundations of Socratic Political Philosophy – Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, n.d.), (*Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, n.d.), (*Socrates | Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, n.d.)

In Plato's Protagoras, Socrates emphasizes that even though the main virtues are wisdom, temperance, courage, justice, and holiness, they are all rooted in a single reality. Socrates seeks for a single virtue that encompasses all other qualities in Plato's Meno. The ultimate happiness of the individual is the goal of virtue's oneness or unity. "Happiness results from harmonious activities operating well under the control of reason." (Pursuit of Happiness, 2023), (*Meno Section 4: 96-100 Summary & Analysis | SparkNotes*, n.d.)

ARISTOTLE'S CONCEPT OF VIRTUES

Virtue is what later came to be referred to as the essence of the moral life, according to Aristotle (384-322 BC), whilst "eudaimonia" is the endpoint or ultimate cause of the moral life. According to Aristotle, virtue represents a habit of choice characterized by the application of moderation as demanded by reason.

According to Aristotle, virtue is first and foremost an act of habit and secondly, a character trait. Being virtuous is a habit of choice, and not merely a habit. According to Aristotle, choice is the conscious desire towards something within our power following intellectual analysis. As a consequence, the decision is somewhat free since it pertains to matters under our own control. When a purposeful choice is made often, it develops into a behavioral habit that we refer to as a virtue. The virtue of courage, for instance, develops when one consistently chooses to do the right thing in the face of suffering. A single act of kindness may be unintentional or entirely impulsive; virtue is the result of repeated actions. (Russell, 2014)

Aristotle discusses virtue extensively in the Nicomachean Ethics. According to Aristotle, an object's virtue stems from its ability to perform its fundamental function or task with excellence. The behavior or function that defines an object's essential nature is what gives it its uniqueness. It is the capability of a knife to cut, the capacity of a house to offer safety and shelter, and the power of an army to prevail in combat. Thus, human virtue is that quality which enables individuals to carry out their unique role or conduct with excellence. Leading one's existence in accordance with reason, according to Aristotle, is what makes mankind exceptional and fundamentally human. (Russell, 2014)

He continues by establishing that a particular state of mind or character is what helps individuals to carry out their actions effectively and continue living in accordance with reason. Aristotle believed that this

condition of character had something to do with the way a person managed joys and sorrows in various settings. The good person chooses the right path, follows it, and experiences happiness—or at least, there is no suffering—as a result of doing so. According to Aristotle, human virtue is the condition of the soul or character in which a person makes the right decisions at the right times and for the right reasons.

Similarities and Differences:

Each philosopher eventually arrives at the conclusion that virtue is regarded as an unchanging or stable aspect of the person. According to Plato, a person who is aware of the good may always decide what is right, and as a result, they will always act correctly. Aristotle also believed that a person could be considered to possess virtue or lack it. The only reason a person is virtuous is because their soul or character is in a certain state.

According to Aristotle, performing good deeds is a necessary but not sufficient prerequisite. One must simultaneously perform the virtues while relishing the deeds they chose to undertake in order to genuinely become virtuous. Like Plato, Aristotle thinks that virtue can only be acquired with self-control and practice.

The physical manifestation of the good, according to Plato, is the source of virtue. Being virtuous is limited to recognizing the good, that is a self-sustaining, autonomous thing. Plato gives us the impression that virtue exists independently of the good individual. According to Aristotle, a virtuous person is inherently linked to virtue. In actuality, virtue is a condition of being that supports rational living. According to Aristotle, virtue is associated to a virtuous person since it is, in some way, inherent in the individual.

Plato's profound association between virtue and the shape of the good in fact makes the attainment of virtue unattainable for individuals. Only after death does the human soul completely discover the nature of the good. One can become virtuous in the future only by interacting directly with the forms, even though mental abstraction, abstaining from material pleasures, and maintaining the soul in the proper proportions will tend one in that direction. According to Aristotle, it is possible to be virtuous. A person with virtue is by definition virtuous after they have reached a position where they are better equipped to live according to reason.

MEANING OF VIRTUES

Arête, the Greek word for virtue, was used to refer to any sort of excellence. The word "virtue," derived from the Latin "virtus," refers to moral excellence. A virtue is a quality or behavioral characteristic that is seen as admirable or desirable in an individual. Personal virtues are distinctive personal characteristics that individuals possess, such as personality traits, and are recognized for their ability to boost both individual and societal well-being. Moral worth is highest for virtues. The antithesis of virtue is vice. Virtues can also be impacted by a variety of other elements, including religion and culture. As a result, different individuals could hold diverse opinions about virtues.

Laird refers to "the righteous quality" as having certain virtues. This type of virtue is characterized by the character trait that motivates this kind of behavior as well as the habit of carrying out one particular kind of task. This type of virtuous behavior can only be distinguished from proper behavior by the fact that the word "virtuous conduct" highlights the practice of doing what is right on a regular basis or habitually. (Roberts & Wood, 2004)

The "requisite quality" virtues are essential for a good character, but they can also be found in terrible personalities, and in actuality, they may even make the bad characters even wicked. These qualities include perseverance and prudence. A villain who persists in his evil deeds is a worse man compared to one who fails to act.

The "generous quality" virtues are primarily emotional in character, adding to existing morally upright deeds something that has not been precisely defined but rather has intrinsic beauty or moral worth. They occasionally even provide an odd air of elegance to actions that are morally despicable. This can be seen in the daring bravery that has occasionally been associated with an army chief as well as the devotion that is frequently extended to those who are wholly undeserving of the same.

The "righteous quality" virtues are the most significant of the three kinds in the life of morality. Since virtues of the "requisite quality" are only useful when they go hand in hand with other virtues of the "righteous quality, they are inferior compared to those of "righteous quality." Virtues of the "generous quality" are scarcely attained by the conscientious performance of one's duties; and more importantly rely more on one's natural resources than do the virtues of the other two types. Individuals who view virtue as something beyond fulfilling one's obligations seem to frequently consider this type of virtue,

and these virtues certainly possess an idyllic quality and depth of feeling that are exceptional in the moral life. (Roberts & Wood, 2004)

By focusing on two concepts, one may come to another unique explanation of virtue. The first is that practicing a virtue involves a type of practical reasoning similar to that of someone practicing a practical skill. It is possible to relate the cultivation and execution of virtue to more everyday pursuits like building, farming, or piano playing. The other concept holds that an individual's happiness or well-being depends on his or her virtue. (Lillie, 2021)

A virtue is not an involuntary feeling or attitude; rather, it is a tendency of character to perform actions with consistency. Furthermore, it extends beyond merely an ordinary disposition or quality to carry out actions that have been objectively recognized as virtues. Moreover, a virtue cannot be acquired by ordinary habit; a disposition needs to be developed by habit. It represents a form of habituation that occurs when a person becomes more intelligent rather than mechanical in his or her ability to perform, similar to what happens with a talent. One can teach and learn a virtue. Acquiring a virtue is similar to acquiring a skill in the sense that it starts with trusting the instructor and the environment in which one is learning, but it also demands one to act on his or her own independent understanding. This is essentially a developmental interpretation of virtue. (Dent, 1975), (Lillie, 2021)

There are two ways in which virtues differ from other dispositions. A virtue is excellent in itself first. A disposition is not considered virtuous if it is only highly regarded in an instrumental or extrinsic sense. Virtues are character traits that drive individuals to strive for them as ideals and are deserving of a special kind of recognition. Secondly, a virtue necessitates an adherence to values. A disposition must be aimed toward what its owner values in order for it to be considered virtuous.

The distinction between a virtuous person and someone who acts virtuously but reluctantly in contradiction to his or her own best judgement should not be overlooked. Being virtuous involves more than just acting morally; it also involves having the appropriate emotions and mindset and performing virtuous deeds in a way that is pleasurable and simple. This is widely seen as reflecting a clear division between virtues and skills because a skill is typically not connected with delight and can be used without experiencing the right emotions. (Stichter, 2010)

VIRTUES IN THE VIA CLASSIFICATION

The evolution of the virtues ought to be examined as facets of a whole and coherent character development. The VIA classification highlights the ways that virtue has served as an ideal throughout history in diverse ideas, as well as the relationship between the ideal and virtue in real-world situations. According to Solomon, the virtues serve simultaneously our own interests and the interests of others around us. Virtue cannot be forced onto someone. Virtues are internal ideals that manifest as actions; they are manifestations of our values and orientations. Values are mere abstractions until we put them into practice. Our worldview determines our values, which serve as the basis for our virtues and vices (Solomon, 1999).

According to Peterson & Seligman (2004), values only turn into virtues when they are consistently applied until they become a person's habitual behavior. A human ability that makes it possible for someone to endure life well is called a virtue (Thompson et al., 2013). It is true that cultivating virtues is not an absolute approach to improving our morality. On a continuum, people can possess one virtue almost entirely and another in minute amounts.

The qualities most frequently practiced become second nature through the application of reason acquired with maturity and the willingness to learn from our failures (Athanassoulis, 2000, Hursthouse & Pettigrove, 2018). Improving one's methods of being—rather than doing—becomes more instinctive the more one practices it. The appropriate thing becomes internalized; therefore, we don't even need to think about it.

According to Zack's (2011) version of Aristotle's virtue theory, practicing virtue consistently shapes our character as we mature. When we take delight in "having the virtue" (such as being honest) and "doing the actions of the virtue," (p. 14) the virtue emerges in us. Excellences in thought and character define virtues. Habit is the foundation of excellence in character (Ross, 1915; Miller, 2011, Hursthouse, 1999). Lawrenz (2021) quotes Aristotle from McKeon (2009): “None of the moral virtues comes to us by nature, for nothing that owes its being to nature can be changed through habit, e.g., the stone whose nature is to fall cannot be trained by habit to rise. Neither by nature then nor contrary to nature are the virtues implanted in us. Rather we are naturally adapted to acquire them, but what matures them in us is habit”. (para.1,103a19)

Character

“Character is not something we have by nature. It is something that originates as a result of free choices” (George, 2017. p. 271). There has been debate and discussion over what constitutes a consensual definition of character (and virtue) across academic disciplines, ever since the Ancient Greeks provided the groundwork (Clement & Bollinger, 2016). The notion that interpersonal relationships influence and shape our character is one less frequently discussed subject (Zagzebski, 2010). According to Mitchell (2015), a person's character cannot be separated from them. Virtue, or the act of excellent character, can aid in this. Good character is formed through the acquisition of the virtues, particularly wisdom, understanding what to pursue and what to abstain from. actions shape our character and have the power to positively or negatively alter it. For instance, the more negative things we do, the more those things become ingrained in our character; the same is true of good deeds. Being kind to others comes from acting kindly in different situations over and over again.

‘Character’ originates from the Greek word charassein, which means to “engrave”. An individual’s pattern of behavior; his moral constitution (Ryan & Bohlin, 1999). Our character is the source of acts of kindness (Mitchell, 2015). Character is the distinct combination of moral qualities that define an individual. These are good (and bad) habits to get engaged in (Miller, 2018; Sommers & Sommers, 2001). Moral character is acquired via self-improvement, overcoming hardships, and cultivating self-respect (Brooks, 2015).

A character’s virtues are its methods of being (MacIntyre, 2007). Behavioural patterns alone do not constitute virtues. Our character is woven together by our attitudes, feelings, values, dispositions, beliefs, and mental states (Goodwin et al., 2015; Mitchell, 2015). Regarding educational leadership, Berkowitz (2020) emphasizes the significance of setting an example for others to follow so they will be inspired to follow in your footsteps.

Character Strengths

Character strengths are "values in action" (VIA; see, for example, Park and Peterson, 2006), encompassing the moral values' psychological expressions in attitudes, feelings, and behaviors. According to Park and Peterson (2006), p. 893, character strengths thus symbolize "the psychological processes or mechanisms that define the virtues," with virtues being universally regarded as fundamental values to be taken in action (Peterson and Seligman, 2004; Park and Peterson, 2006). According to the

Character Strengths and Virtues framework, 2004, character strengths provide the mechanism by which core values—also referred to as "core virtues" by Peterson and Seligman—become routine actions and have positive social consequences.

Martin Seligman was the American Psychological Association president in 1998, when he introduced the concept of Positive Psychology. Seligman (2019) started an initiative to investigate the benefits of positive psychology for promoting people's well-being and potential development, as opposed to therapy's exclusive focus on pathology continued in 1998. The primary goal of Positive Psychology is to assist individuals in living purposeful fulfilling lives. This is the urge to interpret our experiences in order to discover the purpose of our life, which incorporates intellect, spirit, and emotions.

Research focusing on strengths originated from the field of Positive Psychology. Psychologists are therefore in a prime position to disseminate new research (Biswas-Diener et al., 2011). New theories in the science of enhancing and nurturing virtues, talents, and character traits have been brought forth by Positive Psychology (Sosik & Cameron, 2010). Preventive research demonstrates that virtues are human assets that counteract pathology. Building well-being is the critical nature and mission of Positive Psychology (Waterman, 2013), helping people achieve their most significant goals (Seligman, 2018). The Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS) was developed as a result of this aim.

According to Peterson and Seligman (2004), character strengths are "distinct routes to displaying one or another of the virtues" (p. 13). These positive elements of one's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors which, when exercised, lead to higher well-being or flourishing are characterized as character strengths. According to Ng & Tay (2020) the VIA-IS classification is the main method used in personality traits research at the moment. Strengths have been noted by researchers in increasing numbers since 2000 (Biswas-Diener et al., 2011; Berger & McGrath, 2018; Miller, 2018). Leaders in Positive Psychology and inventors of the classification, Peterson & Seligman, believe that a person's character is what makes them who they are. As a result, authors thought that character classification was essential to construct a well-accepted vocabulary of advantageous traits (2004). The VIA Classification (https://www.viacharacter.org/) is the final result.

They believed that with the classification's assistance, virtues could be nurtured and strengthened (2004). They wanted to develop an approach to establish positive traits as a science (McGrath, 2018). The

creators of the Positive Psychology classification model examined several philosophical and theological traditions, such as Taoism and Confucianism, Buddhism and Hinduism, Athenian philosophy, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, with the aim of identifying shared values. Six fundamental virtues were identified as shared by the aforementioned customs by Dahlsgaard (2005) and Peterson and Seligman (2004): transcendence (spiritual strengths), temperance (protective strengths), courage (emotional strengths), justice and humanity (social and community strengths), and wisdom (cognitive strengths). Achieving an outcome of "convergence across time, place, and intellectual tradition about certain core virtues" (p. 210).

The "24 Character Strengths," that contribute in varying degrees to each person's personality, are grouped under these six virtue categories. Individuals can navigate to https://www.viacharacter.org/ to complete the VIA Survey, which unveils their character strengths and teaches them how to effectively capitalize on them. Character strengths are defined by Peterson & Seligman (2004) as trait-like qualities and positive psychological processes that are quantifiable, reflect moral excellence and good character. Philosophers (Miller, 2018; Harmon, 1999) and psychologists (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Ng & Tay, 2020; McGrath, 2018) have engaged in a great deal of debate and discussion over virtues, character, character strengths, the VIA, and traits in general. For instance, while philosopher Miller contends that the coexistence of virtues and strengths presents "tricky philosophical questions," (McGrath, 2018) notes that psychologists typically find the connections drawn between the two useful. Psychologists typically acknowledge their existence as helpful frameworks for characterizing and perceiving people (McGrath, 2018). Philosophers frequently describe virtues as corrective, which means that they offset some challenge that comes with being human, some temptation that must be resisted, or some drive that needs to be diverted toward good deeds (Dahlsgaard et al., 2005) (Yearley, 1990, p. 16). “The ubiquitous virtues, we believe, are what allow the human-animal to struggle against and to triumph over what is darkest within us” (Dahlsgaard et al., 2005, p. 212).

1.3. CONCEPT OF PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR

According to APA Dictionary of Psychology (2018), prosocial behavior is denoting or exhibiting behavior that benefits one or more other people, such as providing assistance to an older adult crossing the street. Voluntary acts carried out for the benefit of others are referred to as prosocial behavior. While

this behavioral inclination would be advantageous throughout one's life, it might be especially important in some early phases, such as childhood. The notion that prosocial activity fosters well-being, psychological adjustment, and favourable academic results is supported by earlier scientific studies.

Prosocial behavior is seen as one of the pillars of a peaceful society and an indicator to the capacity for compassion in humans (Davidov et al., 2016). Prosocial behavior is defined as acts of kindness toward others without direct benefits to the self (Eisenberg et al., 2006). The construct of prosociality is complex and includes a range of actions that kids and adults might take to try to help or advance the needs of others (Dunfield et al., 2011; Brownell, 2013; Paulus, 2018). Prosocial conduct is evident from an early age as children are capable of performing a range of prosocial activities by the time they are two years old (Brownell, 2013; Paulus, 2018). Certain newborn behaviors may even represent basic prosocial behavior in the first year of life (Liddle et al., 2015; Hammond et al., 2017). Furthermore, it appears that young children are eager to help, looking for chances to support others and taking joy in their assistance (Dahl, 2015; Hepach et al., 2017). Early prosocial behavior varies greatly throughout individuals. Some kids assist or share a lot, whereas others do so infrequently or only sometimes (Newton et al., 2016; Schachner et al., 2018).

Prosocial behavior is multifaceted and includes several ways of helping or being of service to others. According to Dunfield et al. (2011), Brownell (2013), Paulus (2018), and others, the most popular categorization of early prosocial behaviors is action-based, which differentiates between three categories of prosocial acts: sharing, compassionate helping, and instrumental helping. Helping someone accomplish an unfulfilled practical objective, such reaching an object that is out of reach or getting beyond a physical barrier, is referred to as instrumental helping (Warneken and Tomasello, 2006, 2007). Helping someone in need by providing them with physical or verbal support is referred to as compassionate helping (also known as "comforting"; Knafo et al., 2008; Newton et al., 2016). Additionally, sharing entails lending another person one's own finite material resources (Brownell et al., 2013a; Newton et al., 2016). According to Davisov et al., (2016), every sub type seems to have both shared and distinct mechanisms or characteristics. Prosocial behavior can also be motivated by egoistic goals, in which the performer gains rewards in addition to helping others (Batson, 1987).

It is surprising that, in spite of the abundance of research on values, virtues, and character strengths and

prosocial behavior, there aren't many studies in the literature right now that use these standardized instruments to assess prosocial behavior and virtues and character strengths in kids between the ages of 11 and 14. The researcher was unable to locate any research on the Superman Evolutionary Scheme that discussed the personalities of the children involved or how their personalities changed over time. Having identified this research gap, the current study attempts to close it by incorporating new well-researched instruments into the investigation. The researcher chose to perform a study using virtues and prosocial behavior on the children enrolled in the Superman Evolutionary Scheme in order to gain a better understanding of the influences (if any) that the scheme has on children. The study hopes to shed light on certain controversial topics related to a theory of virtue, but it does not aim to address all of them. These include the unity of virtue, the relationship between virtue as an ideal and virtue in daily life, the connection between virtue and doing the right thing, and a few others.

2. EMERGENCE OF THE TOPIC

The researcher's personal experiences as a former schoolteacher, includes encounters with moral dilemmas at work due to unethical acts by some of the children, which initially brought the need of practising morals in everyday life to light. The children who lived in the researcher's neighbourhood were the same age group as the pupils in her class. It was intriguing to find as to what made the children in the same age group and social class, taking similar courses, behave differently in circumstances requiring moral acts. What are the factors responsible for their distinctive behavior—are there other factors such as their social groups, school, or home environment that had a positive or negative effect on their behavior?

The researcher learned about the Superman Evolutionary Scheme being practiced in Dayalbagh Satsang through the blog post by the Speaking Tree (2017, May 14) titled, "*Human to Superhuman*". It then became essential for the researcher to investigate if there is any difference between the two—what made the human a superhuman? The researcher felt the need to study the components of children's learning processes that led to changes in their morals and behavioral displays in actions. During initial browsing sessions, the researcher found that there have been many studies about children and their home environments, schools, and peers, but no sufficient and valid study was available on the Superman Evolutionary Scheme. The available literature suggests that the children's ability to think clearly is not

the only thing that motivates them to act appropriately in every circumstance. Instead, it is the children's fundamental values that enable them to make sensible and moral decisions throughout their lives.

Virtue has been defined as ‘‘any psychological process that enables a person to think and act so as to benefit him-or herself and society” (McCullough & Snyder, 2000). Psychological researchers and practitioners have historically been very interested in virtue-related concepts. Examples of such research include the humanistic psychology tradition (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) and family social science research on family strengths and resilience (Sandage & Hill, 2001). A growing body of research on character strengths and virtues has emerged over the last two decade in a variety of fields, including personality psychology (e.g., Krueger, Hicks, & McGue, 2001), moral development (e.g., Walker & Pitts, 1998), positive youth development (e.g., Rich, 2003) and educational psychology (e.g., Narvaez & Lapsley, 2005).

Values in Action (VIA) framework (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) has been suggested for a number of practical applications such as in clinical settings (Seligman & Peterson, 2003; Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005), organizations (Peterson & Park, 2006), and in education (Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2006; Steen, Kachorek, & Peterson, 2003). Positive Psychology has come up with what is certainly the most scientific strategy for using a psychological lens to examine virtue and character traits. The virtues in action (VIA) model (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) is a purportedly comprehensive classification that was first developed to strike a balance between a focus on human flourishing and pathology focused in psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). (Note: The original name of the concept was "virtues in action," and it was mentioned as such in many earlier publications. However, it is currently known as simply VIA.)

Positive Psychology's Values in Action (VIA) framework (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) offers a framework for identifying and categorizing person-specific attributes, such as virtues and character strengths. According to this concept, the virtues are thought to be universal and present in people from various societal, religious, and philosophical origins. Every virtue is made up of multiple character strengths that stand for admirable qualities that people can exhibit in their cognition (thinking), affect (feeling), will (conation or volition), and/or behavior (acting). This framework lists 24-character strengths. Furthermore, cultivating particular character strengths may result in lifestyles that are

psychologically healthier (Park & Peterson, 2009).

Research indicates that therapies and interventions focused on virtue and character traits prove to be beneficial for enhancing psychological well-being in people with different chronic conditions (Yan et al., 2020).

Prosocial behavior is multifaceted and includes several ways of helping or being of service to others. According to Dunfield et al. (2011), Brownell (2013), Paulus (2018), and others, the most popular categorization of early prosocial behaviors is action-based, which differentiates between three categories of prosocial acts: sharing, compassionate helping, and instrumental helping. Helping someone accomplish an unfulfilled practical objective, such reaching an object that is out of reach or getting beyond a physical barrier, is referred to as instrumental helping (Warneken and Tomasello, 2006, 2007). Helping someone in need by providing them with physical or verbal support is referred to as compassionate helping (also known as "comforting"; Knafo et al., 2008; Newton et al., 2016). Additionally, sharing entails lending another person one's own finite material resources (Brownell et al., 2013a; Newton et al., 2016). Despite their obvious differences, the three prosocial behavior subtypes may potentially share the same processes or mechanisms. For instance, different subtypes may share a common motivation or a set of cognitive skills (Davidov et al., 2016). Intercorrelations between the various prosociality subtypes ought to reflect these commonalities. However, there are conflicting results in the research about how various prosociality subtypes interact with one another in the form of early life. When subtypes were evaluated concurrently, some studies (Dunfield et al., 2011; Dunfield and Kuhlmeier, 2013; Kärtner et al., 2014; Paulus et al., 2015) showed no correlation between them, while others found a minor amount of convergence.

Valuing both self-transcendence and openness-to-change was associated with more helping (Misgav et al., 2022). It suggests that the children in the study revealed some association between prosocial behaviour and values which are when put in action, become virtues. But, this study is limited to only helping as a prosocial behavior and to self-transcendence and openness-to-change, which creates a need to explore the associations among various other dimensions of virtues and prosocial behaviors in children. The researcher found no evidence of different virtues being related to one another or virtues being related to prosocial behavior.

As introduced earlier, virtue and prosocial behavior are outcomes of both nature and nurture and follow a path of creation to evolution to survival. The same path is followed in the development of the best human race by an evolutionary process as an important aspect of the Superman Evolutionary Scheme. The race of superman is in the process of evolving into a compassionate, humble, universal being which is the outcome of being nurtured in a spiritual atmosphere. It is believed that individuals raised in such spiritually enriched atmospheres have enhanced opportunities to attain their fullest potential in every aspect: physical, emotional, intellectual, social, and spiritual. Consequently, development within this framework is holistic, emphasizing the fundamental principle of 'nature and nurture' as the central focus guiding all associated activities. Therefore, there exists a need to study these paths of character development including virtues, prosocial behavior and Superman Evolutionary Scheme as a whole. The relationship between nature and nurture is the theme of all three factors. The researcher then framed the following research questions to be covered in the study:

1. What is the impact of the Superman Evolutionary Scheme on the virtues in middle school children?
2. What is the impact of the Superman Evolutionary Scheme on prosocial behavior in middle school children?
3. Is there any correlation between the virtues and prosocial behavior in middle school children enrolled in the Superman Evolutionary Scheme?
4. What is the impact of the Superman Evolutionary Scheme on the virtues in middle school children?
5. What is the impact of the Superman Evolutionary Scheme on prosocial behavior in middle school children?
6. Is there any correlation between the virtues and prosocial behavior in middle school children enrolled in the Superman Evolutionary Scheme?

3. NEED AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Understanding the intricacies of children's behavior, particularly regarding moral development and prosocial behavior, is crucial for creating environments conducive to positive growth. This study aims to delve into the impact of the Superman Evolutionary Scheme on children's virtues and prosocial behavior. Prior to this study, research predominantly focused on factors such as home environments, schools, and peer groups in shaping children's behavior. However, there's a notable absence of literature

exploring the influence of programs like the Superman Evolutionary Scheme on children's character development, especially during the critical ages of middle school.

Drawing upon psychological theories of virtue and character development, particularly the VIA framework by Peterson and Seligman (2004), this study aims to investigate the relationship between participation in the Superman Evolutionary Scheme and the cultivation of virtues and prosocial behaviors in children. Understanding the mechanisms underlying children's moral development is essential for fostering positive societal contributions and personal well-being. By examining how participation in the Superman Evolutionary Scheme correlates with the manifestation of virtues and prosocial behaviors, this study offers valuable insights into the scheme's potential impact on character development during a crucial developmental period.

Insights from this study can inform the design and implementation of interventions aimed at promoting virtues and prosocial behaviors in children, not only within the context of the Superman Evolutionary Scheme but also in broader educational and community settings. By incorporating well-researched instruments to assess virtues and prosocial behaviors, this study bridges the existing gap in the literature, providing a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between structured programs and children's moral development.

This study will address the need to explore the influence of the Superman Evolutionary Scheme on children's virtues and prosocial behaviors, offering theoretical insights and practical implications for promoting positive character development in children. Through rigorous research methodologies, it aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge while paving the way for future studies in this important area of research.

4. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In view of the issues discussed in the preceding sections emphasising the critical significance of incorporating virtues and prosocial behavior in children, the problem of the study is stated as follows:

Impact of Superman Evolutionary Scheme on Virtues and Prosocial behavior: A study on middle school children

5. OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

5.1 *Superman Evolutionary Scheme:*

A scheme started by Dayalbagh, Agra for children ranging 3 weeks to 12 years, for balanced development of body, mind and spirit aimed at gradual evolution of the race called Superman. It is a gender-free scheme open to all. According to this scheme, Superman has been defined as, "A complete man with balanced development of body, mind and spirit is called a Superman." (Satsangi Sahab, 2017). In the present study, Superman Evolutionary Scheme refers to a methodology started by Most Revered Prof. Prem Saran Satsangi Sahab, Chairman, Advisory Committee on Education, Dayalbagh Educational Institutions, in 2017, for the development of Evolutionary Supermen for pre-nursery children of 3 weeks to 2 years (Phase-I), 3 to 5 years (in Phase-II), 6 to 8 years (in phase III) and 9 to 12 years (in phase IV).

5.2 *Virtues:*

Virtues are the core characteristics valued by moral philosophers and religious thinkers: courage, humanity, justice, temperance, transcendence, and wisdom. (Peterson & Seligman, 2004)

In the present study, virtues will be treated as dispositions to do what is right in a particular situation, and a habit of action corresponding to the quality of character.

5.3 *Prosocial behaviour:*

Prosocial behavior is defined as benevolent acts toward others without direct benefit to the self (Eisenberg et al., 2006)

In the present study, prosocial behavior refers to voluntary actions conducted to benefit others (Eisenberg et al., 2013)

5.4 *Middle school children:*

According to NEP 2020, the learners in the age group 11-14 years and in the classes 6th to 8th standards, belong to middle school of school education.

6. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The research objectives of the given study are to:

Objective 1: To study the virtues in the middle school children enrolled in Superman Evolutionary Scheme

Objective 2: To study the virtues in the middle school children not enrolled in Superman Evolutionary Scheme

Objective 3: To study the prosocial behavior in the middle school children enrolled in Superman Evolutionary Scheme

Objective 4: To study the prosocial behavior in the middle school children not enrolled in Superman Evolutionary Scheme

Objective 5: To study the correlation among the virtues in middle school children

Objective 6: To study the correlation between the virtues and prosocial behavior in middle school children

Objective 7: To study the impact of Superman Evolutionary Scheme on the virtues in middle school children

Objective 8: To study the impact of Superman Evolutionary Scheme on the prosocial behavior in middle school children

7. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

Depending on the availability of research evidences, the null and alternative hypotheses have been framed for the study:

H_o: There will be no significant difference between virtues in middle school children enrolled in Superman Evolutionary Scheme and not enrolled in Superman Evolutionary Scheme

H_o: There will be no significant difference between prosocial behavior in middle school children enrolled in Superman Evolutionary Scheme and not enrolled in Superman Evolutionary Scheme

H_1: There will be significant correlation among the virtues in middle school children

H_1: There will be significant correlation between virtues and prosocial behavior in middle school children

H_1: There will be significant impact of Superman Evolutionary Scheme on the virtues in middle school children

H_1: There will be significant impact of Superman Evolutionary Scheme on the prosocial behavior in middle school children

8. VARIABLES OF THE STUDY

The following are the independent and dependent variables of the study:

Independent Variables:

- Superman Evolutionary Scheme

Dependent Variables:

- Virtues in middle school children
- Prosocial Behavior in middle school children

9. RESEARCH DESIGN

9.1 *Methodology:*

The analytical cross-sectional method will be adopted to conduct the present study. It will be observational in nature. The primary purposes of observational studies are to describe and examine the distributions of independent (predictor) and dependent (outcome) variables in a population (sample) and analyze the associations between them (Cummings, 2013). In the present study, the researcher aims to study the impact of an independent variable which is the Superman Evolutionary Scheme on two dependent variables Virtues and Prosocial behavior on a sample of middle school children. The researcher also aims to analyse the associations among these three variables. Hence, it is observational in nature.

Further, an observational study that determines the prevalence of a phenomena, or opinion is called cross-sectional study (Mann, 2012). A cross-sectional study involves study of the association between an outcome and a specific variable of interest (a phenomena, or opinion) (Conrad & Karumanchi, 2013) in a population (sample) who have an attribute or condition at a specific time point (Mann, 2012) regardless of when the attribute or condition first developed (Wang & Cheng, 2020).

Analytic cross-sectional studies provide the groundwork to infer preliminary evidence for a causal relationship (Mann, 2012). This design allows investigators to identify a population or sample (in this study, Middle School Children of Agra district) and collect prevalence data to evaluate outcome (in this study, Virtues and Prosocial behavior) differences between exposed (in this study, children enrolled in Superman Evolutionary Scheme) and unexposed (in this study, children not enrolled in Superman Evolutionary Scheme) participants on a phenomenon, or opinion (in this study, impact of Superman Evolutionary Scheme) (Wang & Cheng, 2020). This design compares the proportion of participants exposed to the phenomena of interest with the proportion of participants non-exposed with the phenomena of interest (Alexander, 2015a), at a specific time point (in this study, age of children at

Middle School) (Mann, 2012). The researcher will collect prevalence data from Middle School Children of Agra district, in the form of Virtues and Prosocial behavior. The differences between the exposed group that is, children enrolled in Superman Evolutionary Scheme) and unexposed group that is, children not enrolled in Superman Evolutionary Scheme will be analyzed. Therefore, it is an analytical cross-sectional study.

9.2 *Sampling technique:*

In the purposive or judgmental sampling method, the subjects are selected by the choice of the investigators. The researcher assumes specific characteristics for the sample (in this study, enrollment of children in Superman Evolutionary Scheme) and therefore, they judge the sample to be suitable for representing the population. (Teddlie & Yu, 2007).

In the present study, the researcher will use purposive sampling to ensure the availability of children enrolled in Superman Evolutionary Scheme for at least one year, matching other probable intervening variables such as socio-economics status, environment and ecology, learning environment, school curriculum, societal norms and regional aspects (culture, traditions and customs and language of exchange- all at the time of study)

Sample:

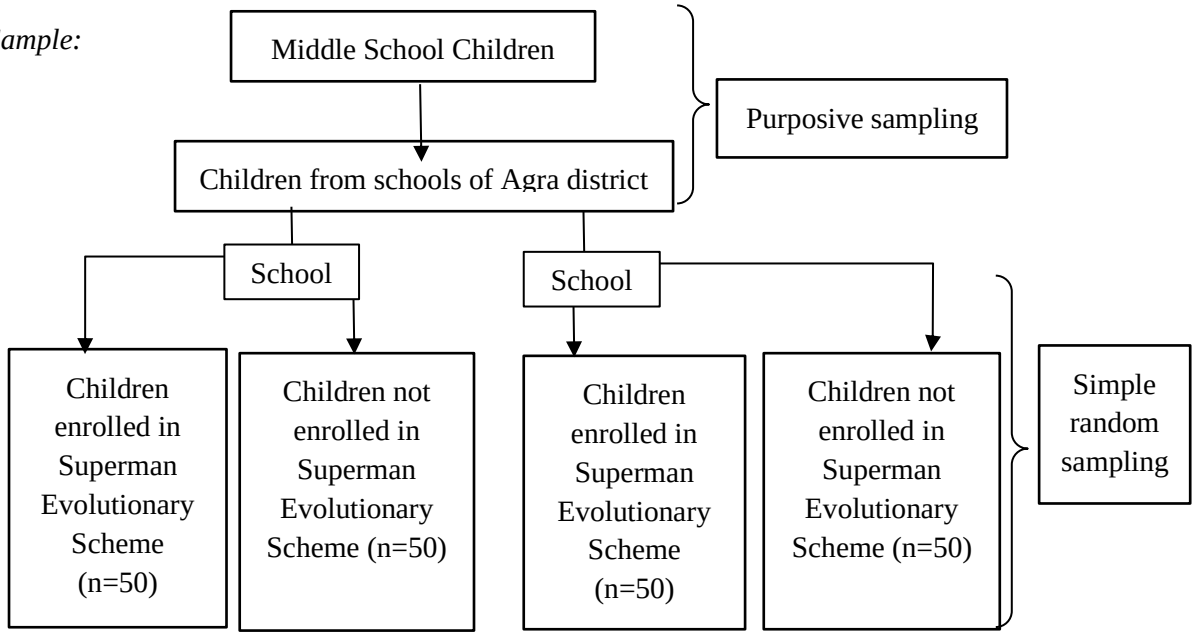
Middle School Children
Purposive sampling
Children from schools of Agra district
School
School
Children enrolled in Superman Evolutionary Scheme (n=50)
Children not enrolled in Superman Evolutionary Scheme (n=50)
Children enrolled in Superman Evolutionary Scheme (n=50)
Children not enrolled in Superman Evolutionary Scheme (n=50)
Simple random sampling

Figure 1 Sample design of the study

Target population for the study includes Middle School Children studying in schools of Agra districts. Sample will include middle school children of Agra district, studying in classes 6^{th} to 7^{th}. Two schools

will be selected using purposive sampling after ensuring the availability of children enrolled in Superman Evolutionary Scheme. The children from these two schools will be selected in two categories: first, enrolled in the Superman Evolutionary Scheme for at least one year. And second, not enrolled in Superman Evolutionary Scheme. 50 students for each group from both the schools will be selected using simple random sampling which will further add up to 100 children from each school.

Tools and Techniques:

Table 1 List of selected tools to be used in the study

S.No.	Variable	Name of the Tool	Author(s)	Measurement base	Status
1	Virtues and Character Strengths	VIA Youth Survey (VIA-Youth)	Peterson, C., & Seligman, (2004)	It is a 5-pointer Likert survey for children ages 8-17 measuring 24-Character Strengths.	Reference for tool construction
2	Virtues and Character Strengths	The Character Strengths Inventory for Children (CSI-C)	Shoshani A and Shwartz L (2018)	It is a self-report character inventory for children designed for administration directly to elementary school-children aged 7–12. It provides an evaluation of 24- Character Strengths.	Reference for tool construction
3	Virtues and Character Strengths	The Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS)	Peterson, Park, & Seligman, (2005)	It is a 5-pointer Likert self-report questionnaire that measures 24-Character Strengths in adolescents and adults	Reference for tool construction
4	Prosocial Behavior	Prosocial Tendencies Measure-Revised (PTM-R)	Carlo, G.,& Randall, B.A., (2003)	It consists of 25 items that assess 6 types of prosocial behaviors. It is the revised version of PTM for younger adolescents, ages 11 to16.	Selected

In order to study the virtues in middle school children, the researcher explored available standardized tools measuring virtues and studies conducted using these tools. The tools which have been used to study virtues are- the VIA Youth Survey (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The Character Strengths Inventory for Children (CSI-C) (Shoshani & Shwartz, 2018), and the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS) (Peterson, Park, & Seligman, 2005). These tools have been used for studying samples including adolescents and adults, but the researcher did not find any such tool studying the virtues for the age group of middle school children.

The VIA Youth Survey (VIA-Youth), Peterson & Seligman (2004), is a 5-pointer Likert survey for children ages 8-17 measuring 6 Virtues and 24-Character Strengths (Ruch et al., 2014, 2020, 2022).

The Character Strengths Inventory for Children (CSI-C) Shoshani & Shwartz (2018), is a self-report character inventory for children designed for administration directly to elementary school-children aged 7–12. It provides an evaluation of 24- Character Strengths (Miller, 2018), (Ruch, Platt, et al., 2014), (Niemiec & Pearce, 2021), (Kretzschmar et al., 2022).

The Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS), Peterson, Park, & Seligman (2005), is a 5-pointer Likert self-report questionnaire that measures 24-Character Strengths in adolescents and adults (Azañedo et al., 2014).

The researcher will use these tools as references for a performance-based tool construction which will measure the Virtues in middle school children in the present study.

The researcher reviewed several standardized tools for measuring Prosocial behavior including, Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), developed by Goodman, R.N., (1997), Child Social Behavior Questionnaire (CSBQ) developed by Warden, D., et al., (2000), Prosocial Personality Battery (PSB) developed by Penner, L.A., (2002), and Prosocial Tendencies Measure-Revised (PTM-R) developed by Carlo, G.,& Randall, B.A., (2003). The researcher selected Prosocial Tendencies Measure-Revised (PTM-R) which consists of 25 items that assess 6 types of prosocial behaviors, because it is the latest standardized tool available having good psychometric properties (Carlo et al., 2003), (Rodrigues et al., 2017), (Reig-Aleixandre et al., 2023). It is the revised version for younger adolescents ages 11 to16 of widely accepted PTM for adults. Therefore, it has been selected for administration and data collection in the present study.

9.3 *Data collection and Analysis:*

The data collected by the researcher through the implementation of the tool(s) will be analysed by using descriptive statistics- mean and standard deviation and inferential statistics- multiple correlation and t-test according to the need of the objectives of the study and the nature of data in hand.

Table 2 List of tools and techniques to be used against each objective of the study

S.No.	Research Objectives	Tools and Techniques for Data Analysis
1	To study the virtues in the middle school children enrolled in Superman Evolutionary Scheme	• Survey through structured Performance-based tests for Virtues (to be developed) • Mean • Standard Deviation
2	To study the virtues in the middle school children not enrolled in	• Survey through structured Performance-based tests for Virtues (to be developed)

	Superman Evolutionary Scheme	• Mean • Standard Deviation
3	To study the prosocial behaviour in the middle school children enrolled in Superman Evolutionary Scheme	• Prosocial Tendencies Measure-Revised (PTM-R) • Mean • Standard Deviation
4	To study the prosocial behaviour in the middle school children not enrolled in Superman Evolutionary Scheme	• Prosocial Tendencies Measure-Revised (PTM-R) • Mean • Standard Deviation
5	To study the correlation among the virtues in middle school children	• Multiple correlation
6	To study the correlation between the virtues and prosocial behaviour in middle school children	• Multiple correlation
7	To study the impact of Superman Evolutionary Scheme on the virtues in middle school children	• t-test
8	To study the impact of Superman Evolutionary Scheme on the prosocial behaviour in middle school children	• t-test

The objectives one and two, that is, to study the virtues in the middle school children enrolled in the Superman Evolutionary Scheme, and the virtues in the middle school children not enrolled in Superman Evolutionary Scheme, the researcher will administer a self-developed performance-based test for virtues on the children.

In the process of administration of performance-based tests, the children will be involved in various activities (individually as well as in group). There will be 24 activities of 30 minutes each, for each of 24-character strengths (which further combine to form 6 virtues in the study), to be conducted in 24 academic days during the school hours or as per the consent received from the Principal and parents of the children. The performance of participants will be recorded in video formats for future references with the consent of participants and their parents.

No child will be subjected to forceful participation in any of the activities, nor will they be put in any conflicting situation during the administration of the performance-based tests.

Activities will involve problem-based-situation seeking responses from the children related to their personal experiences depicting their own as well as their peers' virtuous acts. Their responses will be assessed to ascertain the presence or absence of virtue in them. In order to ensure the reliability, cross

verification will be done for these responses with peers, teachers and parents of the participants without making references to participants' responses**.**

The activities will be designed based on review of related literature. Each activity may reveal data about one or more than one character strength (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Some sample activities are as below.

Children will be divided in groups with an equal number of participants in each group. Each group will consist of 15 children and intra-group activities will be conducted to study the character strengths. One such activity is as below:

Candid candies: The character strength of honesty implies "speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's feelings and actions" (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). In order to assess the character strength of honesty, a performance-based test will be administered on the participants.

The researcher will make two copies of a list of names of all the participants from one particular class. The list will contain two columns: first for names of the participants and second for number of candies. The first list will contain the number of candies to be given to each participant (which is two for all) and the second list will contain the number of candies that each participant picks up from the jar/ bowl. More than 50 paper chits with number 2 written in all of them will be kept in another jar/ bowl.

In a vacant room other than the classroom of the participants, the researcher will create the setup of assessment. A jar or bowl full of candies will be placed on a table and a camera will be set in the room in such a manner that it records the activities around the table but is not visible to the participants. In the same room, an assistant (who has no direct or indirect relations with any of the participants) to the researcher will sit with the second list of names of the participants that the researcher prepared.

The researcher will reach the classroom with the jar/ bowl of paper chits along with an empty jar/ bowl and introduce the activity to the participants. Each participant will go to the researcher when his/ her name will be called. Then he/ she will pick up one paper chit from the jar/ bowl, read it silently in and without showing, keep it in another empty jar/ bowl on the table. Thereafter, he/she will leave the classroom and reach the room where the candies are kept. On reaching the table with the jar/ bowl of candies, the assistant will tell the participant to "Take the number of candies that were in your paper

chit"? Here, the participant can choose any number of candies, be it the number written on his/ her paper chit or any number that he/ she wants. But the assistance will not speak anything other than the above sentence to any of the participants in order to guide or stop them from taking more or a smaller number of candies. The assistance will only write the number of candies that the participant told were written on his/ her paper chit along with the number of candies that the participant actually picks up from the jar/ bowl. The participant will then sit in the same room with the candies. Then the same activity will be repeated for all the participants.

After the activity is completed, the researcher will collect from the assistance, the second list of names of the participants with the number of candies they took from the jar/ bowl. The number of candies will be tallied with the original number of candies (that is two) that the participants were supposed to take. The participants taking two candies will be assessed to have honesty as their top character strength (being the most used character strength in the situation, (Peterson & Seligman, 2004)); participants taking three candies will be assessed to have honesty as their middle character strength (being the less used character strength in the situation, (Peterson & Seligman, 2004)) and; participants taking more than three candies will be assessed to lack honesty as their character strength.

Other activities in the performance-based tests might assess honesty as a bi-product of the assessment for the specific character strengths in question. This will give another opportunity to the researcher to verify the recorded responses of the participants in this activity and reach reliable results by the end of the performance-based tests.

In order to study objectives three and four, that is, to study the prosocial behavior in the middle school children enrolled in Superman Evolutionary Scheme and the prosocial behavior in the middle school children not enrolled in the Superman Evolutionary Scheme, the research will administer Prosocial Tendencies Measure-Revised (R) on the children. The collected data will be analyzed using mean and standard deviation.

In the objectives five and six to study the correlation among the virtues in the middle school children and to study the correlation between the virtues and prosocial behavior in the middle school children, the researcher will use multiple correlation for analysis of associations.

In order to study the impact of the Superman Evolutionary Scheme on the virtues and prosocial behavior

in middle school children, the researcher will use the t-test.

10. DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

- Schools in Agra district, Uttar Pradesh
- DEI Board Schools (to ensure the availability of maximum number of children enrolled in the Superman Evolutionary Scheme)
- The children who were enrolled in Superman Evolutionary Scheme for at least one year, indicating a specific developmental stage.
- 6 Virtues (courage, humanity, justice, temperance, transcendence, and wisdom)
- Prosocial behavior

11. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study lies in its potential to deepen the understanding of children's moral development through virtues and prosocial behavior within the context of the Superman Evolutionary Scheme.

The text identifies a notable gap in the literature concerning the influence of programs like the Superman Evolutionary Scheme on children's virtues and prosocial behaviors. By undertaking this study, the researcher aims to fill this void and contribute to the field of developmental psychology, positive psychology, and education as well.

Virtues are genetic and based on an evolutionary process (Peterson and Seligman, 2004), (Mayerson, 2020), (Ruch. W., 2020). Prosocial behavior are results of genetic factors and are largely heritable (Knafo-Noam et al., 2015, 2018). If the results of this study suggest any correlation between virtues and prosocial behavior in middle school children, further research work can be carried out to understand if the correlation is because of the genetic factors in the children.

If this study yields positive impact of Superman Evolutionary Scheme on the virtues and prosocial behavior of middle school children, it would be helpful in suggesting a number of ways in which virtues and prosocial behavior can be developed and nurtured well from an early age through Superman Evolutionary Scheme and/or interventions like it. And if the results do not show any significant impact of the Superman Evolutionary Scheme on the virtues and prosocial behavior in middle school children, new interventions can be designed in line with the suggestions of the current study.

As suggested by Chow J.C. (2018), language-based interventions help in development of prosocial behavior in children. If the Superman Evolutionary Scheme which uses Sanskrit, Hindi and English languages in various activities including cultural dance performances as well as commands for Yoga, results in a positive impact on children's prosocial behaviour, this will further support the beneficial role of language-usage on the development of prosocial behavior in children, who undergo the scheme and/or interventions similar to the Superman Evolutionary Scheme.

This study has the potential to enhance educational outcomes for the children as well as the teachers and other stakeholders in the society. By identifying factors that influence virtue cultivation and prosocial behavior in children, educators can tailor instructional approaches to better support character development in the early childhood through adulthood. Given the crucial role of moral and prosocial development in shaping children's overall well-being and success, this study will prove to be beneficial for all levels of stakeholders.

The theoretical framework underpinning this study draws upon established psychological theories of virtue and character development, such as the VIA framework and Prosocial Tendencies Measure-Revised (PTM-R). By applying these theories and tools respectively, in the context of the Superman Evolutionary Scheme, the study will contribute to the advancement of psychological knowledge and theory. It has been found that there are correlations between one or two types of virtues used in the study (Peterson and Seligman, 2004) but on a sample of adults (Ruch W and Proyer RT, 2015). However, if the study provides correlation among different virtues included in the study as well as results about the degree of associations between and among different virtues studied on the age group of middle school children, it will be useful for further research to find if such associations exist in ages prior to and beyond middle school age, for the children having similar environmental, social and physical status as for the children enrolled in Superman Evolutionary Scheme.

It is evident in past research that correlations are found between two types of character strengths and two forms of prosocial behaviour (Schnall et al., 2010), Landis et al., 2009). If the study leads to results suggesting correlations between various forms of virtues and prosocial behavior in middle school children, it will become easier for future researchers to use these results in understanding the virtues and prosocial behavior in children of the middle school age to find if such correlations exist in ages prior to

and beyond middle school age. It will also be helpful in creation of future interventions for the development of virtues and prosocial behaviour in children of same and nearby ages.

It will also be helpful in the creation of a tool which assesses both virtues and prosocial behavior at once irrespective of the age group of the participants, which the researcher couldn't find during the current study.

Results and inferences gained from this study can inform the development of policies and practices aimed at promoting positive character development in children. Understanding how participation in structured programs impacts virtuous and prosocial development can guide educators, policymakers, and community leaders in designing effective interventions.

In conclusion, the significance of this study lies in its potential to generate new knowledge, inform policy and practice, enhance educational outcomes, contribute to psychological theory, and empower communities. By undertaking a rigorous investigation into the influence of the Superman Evolutionary Scheme on virtues and prosocial behavior of middle school children, this study has the capacity to make meaningful contributions to the field of developmental psychology and beyond. Understanding the impact of structured programs on children's moral development can empower communities to create supportive environments that foster positive character traits. This study has the potential to benefit not only individual children but also the broader communities in which they reside.

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